

## REMARKS FOR SHANNON ESTENOZ

*Good morning.*

- What a landmark moment. I was sitting here thinking that the River of Grass is usually a quiet place – but I feel like cheering!
  - This announcement is a remarkable and exciting development for America's Everglades.
  - Thank you, Governor Crist, for your vision and leadership in bringing us to this important day.
- And thank you, Bob Buker, for being our partner in protecting and restoring both the Everglades and our coastal estuaries.
  - It's because of agriculture that this is still open land – indeed one of the few remaining areas of south Florida where large tracts of undeveloped land still exist.
  - This land is perfect for the enormous water storage and treatment system needed to revive and sustain the Everglades.
  - It is “the missing link” needed to reestablish a part of the historic connection between Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades.
- When the purchase is finalized in the coming months, the South Florida Water Management District anticipates acquiring title to as much as 187,000 acres of land, most of it here in the Everglades Agricultural Area.
  - U.S. Sugar will retain use of this land and assets for six years to continue agricultural operations, fulfilling their business and contractual responsibilities.
- The District will be using resources designated for Everglades restoration to make this important investment in land.
  - This means cash as well as Certificates of Participation.
  - 1.75 billion dollars is a large investment but the restoration value that we are buying is much larger,
  - In fact it's priceless.

- I want to close by sharing a thought I had when I learned of the Governor's decision.
  - Everglades restoration has required a cast of thousands over the years, working hard, closely together every day making incremental but steady progress, But every once in a while there is an opportunity to take a quantum leap forward.
  - Today we make a quantum leap
  - And I'm thrilled and honored that we're gathered here together to see it happen.
- Today, we offer the Everglades:
  - Restoration opportunities once thought impossible;
  - Environmental progress once considered unachievable; and
  - Protection once believed unattainable.
- History will mark today as a watershed event for restoring our beloved national treasure – the Everglades -- and generations will thank you Governor for your leadership in making it happen.
  - Thank you again, Governor Crist, and thank you, U.S. Sugar for partnering with the District to make Everglades history.
- We've agreed on a Statement of Principles that will guide our negotiations in the coming months.
  - Mr. Buker, representing U.S. Sugar, and I, representing the South Florida Water Management District, will sign the Statement.
  - Governor Crist will sign as our witness.
  - I'd like to now invite the Governor and Mr. Buker to join me at the table.